1: Jenness--92-93 (1913-16) 1922 Copper Eskimo
116, 756, 424

"Of more intangible things the inheritance of shamanistic power is the most important. Higilak, for example, learned shamanism from her father, and Ilatsiak, the greatest living exponent of the profession, was teaching his adopted son. Yet it is not quite correct to say that the power can be handed down. [93] All that the possessor can bequeath is a knowledge of the necessary procedure, and what may be called his 'good-will in the business.' The actual acquisition of the power depends on other factors which will be discussed in a later chapter."

1: Jenness--93-94 (1913-16) 1922 Copper Eskimo
116, 643, 555, 756

"The shaman Uloksak, who was credited with wonderful powers of control over the world of spirits, was probably not more than thirty years of age. He was bolder and more unscrupulous than most of the Eskimos, and for a time had considerable authority among the natives around the Coppermine river; but a streak of cowardice in his nature finally brought discredit on him and destroyed much of his influence. Farther east, however, in Bathurst inlet, there was one man, Ilatsiak, who might with justice have claimed the title of chief. His fame as a shaman had spread far and wide, and he had no rival in that sphere. The most extraordinary powers were ascribed to him -- he could discover the past, foretell the future, and, more than any other shaman, control the supply of game and the elementary forces of nature. In all matters relating to everyday life his integrity was beyond question; he had never been known to abuse his influence, or divert it to his own selfish ends at the expense of his fellow-countrymen. In stature he was below the mean, and he was well advanced in years -- his beard, in fact, was quite white -- but he was still vigorous and full of energy, and his movements quick and decided. His pleasant and open countenance wore usually a somewhat grave expression, and his manner was calm and dignified, but there was no trace of arrogance in his demeanour. Natives in his presence would recount the most wonderful tales of his shamanistic feats, and he would listen quietly, without either assenting or denying. His small black eyes were shrewd and sparkling, indicating a personality far in advance of

the average Eskimo's. The natives of Bathurst inlet seemed to obey him without question. Frequently he led them on their migrations; he brought about forty of them with him to visit our station, and without question they were the most honest and the best behaved natives we ever had dealings with. The Rev. Mr. Girling informs me that Ilatsiak is now the very best friend that the [94] missionaries have in this region; all his influence is being exerted on their behalf. He possesses intelligence enough, it seems, to understand the new conditions created by the coming of the white men, and to try and adapt himself and his people to the change. Even Ilatsiak, however, will probably lose his authority when infirmity overtakes him, and when he is gone there will be no one to take his place. The Eskimo is intolerant of anything like restraint. Every man in his eyes has the same rights and the same privileges as every other man in the community. One may be a better hunter, or a more skilful dancer, or have greater control over the spiritual world, but this does not make him more than one member of a group in which all are free and theoretically equal."

3: Rasmussen--28 (c. 1923)' 1932 Copper Eskimo
116, 756, 791

"The functions of shamans were:

To cure the sick.

When a person became ill and could not get well again, a present was taken to a shaman, preferably some costly object like a dog, a sledge, a gun or a knife. It was then his duty to hold a seance in the house of the sick, in order to clear up the cause of the illness. If only the cause of the ailment were discovered it was usually considered to be synonymous with a cure. In most cases the cause was evil spirits, which for some reason or other had attacked the person, or it may have been a breach of taboo."

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
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monotonous songs to the accompaniment of a drum. At times their dances were interspersed with strange religious ceremonies, always fascinating to watch and occasionally difficult to comprehend. They knew nothing of Christianity. Their forefathers had taught them to believe in a goddess dwelling at the bottom of the sea who controlled both the winter storms and the supply of seals. They did not worship her as we understand worship, but they held her in great awe, and often tried to secure her goodwill by persuasion or by threats. Many of their misfortunes were laid directly to her door; others were ascribed to the spirits of the dead, or to the machinations of sorcerers. Their sole defence against these imaginary foes lay in their shamans or medicine-men, who claimed to summon into their bodies powerful spirits of men and animals that had voluntarily placed themselves under human control. The medicine-men were thus the physicians, the prophets, and the priests of their little communities. Speaking as the mouthpieces of their spirits, they elucidated the past and foretold the future; and they sent their protecting spirits to bring back the stolen souls of the sick or to compel the sea-goddess to deliver up the seals she withheld from the starving Eskimos. Yet there were many occasions in life when even they could give no assistance, and the people, realizing this, accepted their fate with the fortitude customary to their race.

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In these and other ways they showed a greater familiarity with the customs of the white man than the natives of Dolphin and Union Strait. We found even more astounding evidences of contact with Europeans when we visited their snow-huts.

The village itself differed slightly from the usual type, the houses being arranged in line and separated by considerable intervals; normally they lie in a cluster, in order that no evil spirits may harm the inmates as they wander in the darkness from one hut to another. Johansen and I began our tour at one end, and dropped a trail of matches and needles along the line to show our appreciation of the scraps of blubber, meat, and fish with which each housewife paid us tribute. The last hut was also the largest. A dance-house framed the entrance, and half a dozen dogs, twice the usual number, squabbled in the passage, indicating that the occupant was a man of influence in his community. We brushed the dogs aside, and crawled on hands and knees through the low doorway at the inner end. Seated in state on his sleeping-platform was Knife, by repute the shrewdest Eskimo, and the most powerful medicine-man, in this section of the country; and on each side of him, supporting his dignity, sat a wife, the one chosen for her beauty, the other for her skill in hunting. He smiled a welcome as we entered, and, with a haughty gesture of his hand, motioned the younger woman to give us her seat.

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Johansen, who wore an imperial, and I, who trimmed 123
my beard once a week with a pair of No. o clippers, were quite elderly. They asked me at last whether the two former were not my sons. I gravely assured them they were not mine, but Johansen's.

Nothing disturbed the harmony of our relations 123
until some natives from the settlement near the Liston 761
and Sutton Islands reported that one of their young men had died a short time before, and openly accused me of his murder. They could not charge me with physical violence, for I was a hundred miles away on the Coppermine River at the time of his decease; but they said that I had stolen his soul by magic, and deliberately withheld it until his body pined away and died. Foolish as this accusation seemed, we could not 123
blind ourselves to its seriousness. The Eskimos knew 627
nothing of our law or of the police. Their own penalty for murder was assassination, unless the relatives of the dead man agreed to accept a heavy blood-price. They might not have dared to apply this penalty to me, because trading would cease immediately and my well-armed party make reprisals. But no one could say what would happen. Certainly it was not safe for me to wander in and out of their huts as freely as before; some hot-headed individual might forget discretion and stab me in the back as I crawled through a low doorway.

In spite of the preponderating sentiment against [756]

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me, a few of my Eskimo friends still believed in my innocence, and sought for an influential medicine-man who could unravel the mystery of the young man's death. Knife's arrival was well timed, for no medicine-man in the district enjoyed greater prestige. The familiar spirits of which he was the mouthpiece spoke infallible truth, and whether they pronounced me innocent or guilty the verdict would carry credence everywhere.

Palaiyak returned from the snow-huts on the beach one evening and whispered in my ear that Knife was in the dance-house preparing to hold his investigation. I calculated the chances quickly. Knife knew that I spoke his language, and it was not in Eskimo nature to accuse a man of murder to his face. Moreover he was crafty, and would consult his own interests before everything else. At the present moment he sorely needed ammunition and other goods that I could supply. Would he dare to name me guilty to my face? I decided to attend his séance and hear the verdict myself.

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[533]
The people had ceased dancing when I entered the hut and were whiling away the moments by singing without the drum. Half of them were drawn up in a circle; the remainder, for whom there was no room in the ring, formed knots of two and three in the background. Over in one corner stood Cockney, our English cook, who had been quietly watching the

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gave place to incantations, and shaman after shaman sent forth his spirit to seek the dread sea-goddess at the bottom of the ocean and force her to relent. Temporary lulls in the storms drove every hunter to the sealing-grounds; on calm days they left the settlement two or three hours before dawn and returned in the darkness. As the dogs dragged the booty into the passageways the children threw themselves on the seal carcasses and poured water into their mouths to please their spirits and induce other seals to rise to the hunters' harpoons. Dolphin and Union Strait was one of the richest sealing-grounds along the Arctic coast, and the natives with whom we camped escaped any dire privations this winter; but in Coronation Gulf, as we learned afterward, many Eskimos ate the sealskin covers of their bows, and some old people perished through the hardships they were compelled to endure.

The storms were responsible for other tragedies. A boy of about six years, the only son of a strange, priest-like individual whom we knew as "The Prophet," was blown from the roof of a snow-hut during a gale, breaking his thigh just above the knee. The father, aided by an elderly medicine-man, set the leg in short splints bound round with a caribou hide. As soon as I heard of the accident I offered to take the lad to our station, where we would care for him

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until he could walk again; and the parents, who had often been our guests, gratefully accepted, on condition that the old medicine-man also gave his consent. When I asked them why they needed the medicine-man's permission they told me that he had undertaken to effect a cure, provided he were given the boy in payment; and that they had consented, much against their will, lest the child should be crippled for life. They requested the old man to release them from the engagement, but he refused, not unnaturally, perhaps, since he hoped that the boy would support him in his declining years; and the parents dared not go back on their word for fear of the old man's witchcraft. So the boy did not return with me, but remained in the settlement; and though his leg healed rapidly, his family lost him for ever.

Fate dealt less harshly with Fish-Head, a kindly old simpleton who harboured no ill-will toward any one. He had bought from me a .44 Winchester rifle, which he lashed inside a sealskin and stored at the back of his sleeping-platform. Knife, the shrewd medicine-man who had acquitted me of murder, told him that the weapon would rust inside the hut, and advised him to keep it on the parapet among the bales of clothing. Two nights after the old man changed its position the rifle disappeared. No one, of course, had stolen it; all the people accepted Knife's explanation,

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spirits took possession of his body. We listened to their stories courteously but incredulously, for we had heard similar tales of other medicine-men; and when he quietly informed us one morning that something was wrong with our schooner, that the thing which made it go had broken during the night, we paid no attention. What could he know about the vessel or its engine, since he had never seen a schooner before, nor indeed any boat that moved under sails or power? Yet that same afternoon we discovered a serious crack in the rafter supporting the roof of our kitchen, and the rafter was the schooner's jib-boom! Was it merely coincidence, I wonder, or did the old man really possess some uncanny power of which we, for all our vaunted knowledge, were ignorant?

As the days grew longer and the air warmer, the harbour became more deserted. Cox and O'Neill had already gone eastward to continue their survey of the coast, Anderson and Chipman had gone west to examine the Crocker River, and Johansen was exploring the south coast of Victoria Island. The Musk-ox people returned to their home, and the local natives began to separate into small bands and move toward different hunting-grounds.

Suddenly a case of ammunition disappeared, and the handful of natives who lingered beside us disclaimed all knowledge of the theft. Our old friend Knife could have enlightened us, for he always kept abreast

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of any mischief that was afoot; but his lips appeared sealed. The affair clearly called for strategy. In the quiet of the evening Girling and I critically compared rifles until the inquisitive Knife, drawn more and more into the discussion, rushed off at last to bring his own Winchester for a similar inspection. With his rifle securely in our hands we sprang the trap; we would not return it until he informed. The rascal scarcely hesitated; he not only revealed the name of the thief, but offered to guide us to his camp, since the man had already moved away toward Victoria Island. Morning saw our new ally running ahead of the dog-team, setting the course, while Girling and I, armed with automatics, trotted steadily in the rear, gripping the handle-bars of the sled.

All the men in the thief's village were absent at the sealing-ground when we halted our team, and only women and children had charge of the camp. We ransacked his tent inside and out, amid voluble protests from the outraged wife, who planted herself in front of each bag and tried to prevent its examination; her outcries subsided into an uneasy muttering when we uncovered thirty small boxes of the missing cartridges. Unable to find the remaining twenty we decided to await the thief himself, and deposited his bow and arrows on our sled to aid his memory.

After some hours an old man appeared in the distance, preceded by two dogs dragging a seal. The

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sauntered down to the weir. As I watched her she shouted, and wading into the water, plied her spear frantically to right and left. Instantly the camp was in an uproar. First the men dashed out, some naked, some half dressed, and, racing headlong to the stream, plunged into the water after her; but all the women loitered in the rear. Then shrieks of laughter mingled with the loud shouts and angry ejaculations of the men; the weir was empty, and the women had taken their revenge.

There was an elderly medicine-man in this camp, one whom we had nicknamed Socrates on account of his snub nose and unusual ugliness. He was a good-natured fellow, but rather dull-witted, and of no great authority among his countrymen because his guardian spirits were credited with little power. He thought fit to hold a séance during our visit, and, from sheer malice, as I believe, directed his utterances against Patsy and myself. Amid much unintelligible nonsense, he alluded to Patsy as the boy whose legs were too long, and to myself as the man who was frightening away the fish by dipping an iron cup into the water, iron, as every one knew, being distasteful to the salmon. But, unfortunately for his credit, the largest shoal of the season unexpectedly entered the weir within two hours of his séance, and the Eskimos, who attributed it to myself in some way, laughed at their seer, who perforce concealed his discomfiture under a foolish smile.